

USAID and Agriculture:

Restoring the University Partnership

David J. Sammons

*Senior Advisor for University
Relations and Agricultural
Research, Training and Outreach
(on leave from Purdue University)*



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Principal Focus of My Duties

- Provide leadership for rebuilding the traditionally strong partnership between the agricultural university community and USAID
- Participate in discussions with the Agency pertinent to the interests of the agricultural university community
- Respond to inquiries and requests from the university community

Examples of Principal Activities

- Agricultural research priority setting
- CRSP ME rebidding process
- Long term training initiatives
- Support to BIFAD/SPARE
- TraiNet issues/discussions
- Revision of the SPARE Charter
- Rewrite of the CRSP Guidelines

Examples of Principal Activities

- Participant in CG systemwide activities: CG Center Board; SLOs; educational initiatives
- Informal liaison with multiple external organizations including: USDA/CSREES; ALO; NASULGC; MCC; World Bank
- Agricultural university dialogues (principal effort during Spring 2005)

Approach to University Visits

Initiate dialogue with the agricultural university community through visits to 15 selected Land Grant institutions across the country during the winter/spring of 2005

University Visits

- Northeast: Penn State; Connecticut; Rhode Island; Delaware State
- Midwest: Minnesota; Kansas State; Oklahoma State
- West: New Mexico State; Arizona; Hawaii; Washington State; Idaho
- South: Florida; Tuskegee; Louisiana State

Rationale for Selection of Universities Visited

- Geographic diversity
- Diverse breadth of historical and/or current experience with the Agency
- Current intensity of interests in strengthening international activities
- Specific invitation from senior administration

Agenda for Each University Visit

- Meetings with senior administration
- Faculty and staff discussions in “open forum” Q&A context
- Discussions with students interested in international development careers
- Seminar presentation to community
- Duration: 1-2 days per institution

Questions Addressed at Each University Visited

- What can the Agency do to be a better partner with the university community?
- What can universities offer to the Agency that will strengthen the university role as a key Agency partner?
- How do each of us (the university community and USAID) define partnership? What are our expectations and goals for a closer and reinvigorated relationship?

Content of Discussions

- **Principal Messages:**
 - **Agriculture is back on the Agency's agenda.**
 - **Long term training is of renewed interest to USAID and there is a clear role for universities.**
 - **The Agency is interested in strengthened partnerships with universities on behalf of the development agenda.**

Content of Discussions (cont.)

- **Examples of current university linkages:**
 - CRSPs
 - Ag Biotech
 - PFID
 - CG system relationships
 - BIFAD/SPARE led initiatives
- **USAID Agriculture Strategy, including the broadened definition of agriculture**

USAID Agricultural Strategy: Linking Producers to Markets

- Expand **trade** opportunities and improve the trade capacity of producers.
- Improve the social, economic, and environmental **sustainability** of agriculture.
- Mobilize **science and technology** and foster the capacity for innovation.
- Strengthen agricultural **training and education, outreach, and adaptive research**.

Content of Discussions (cont.)

- **Emerging Partnership Opportunities**
 - Long term training
 - Renewal of the CRSP portfolio
 - Global Horticulture Assessment
 - Tsunami relief and recovery
 - GDAs
 - Agriculture/NRM research priority setting

Principal Findings (1)

The visits provided clear evidence of an internationally-engaged and energized faculty and university administration as well as an institutional commitment to a global agenda. Agency priorities, especially as expressed in the Ag Sector Strategy, resonate with what universities do best.

Principal Findings (2)

Numerous problems/concerns and issues relative to the University-Agency relationship emerged. At the same time, many good ideas for new initiatives that could strengthen the partnership were discussed.

Principal Insights (1)

Although clear interest in revitalizing the University-Agency partnership exists on both sides, the goals for such are not clearly articulated by either the university community or the Agency.

Principal Insights (2)

There continues to be a lack of mutual understanding in the context of partnerships, international interests, and capacity for participation in development efforts.

Principal Insights (3)

The term “partnership” is used quite differently by the Agency and the universities.

Proposed Next Steps to Frame Second Year in the Agency

- **Joint University-Agency discussions on future partnership to focus on:**
 - **Identification of most desirable university roles in international development**
 - **Defining partnership for development**
 - **Goals and expectations of each party**
 - **Congruency of goals for partnership**
 - **Impediments that constrain partnership**
 - **Needs of each party for recommitment**

Proposed Next Steps to Frame Second Year in the Agency (cont.)

- **Visits to selected universities, especially HBCUs, smaller Land Grants, and Tribal Colleges**
- **Distance education applications to LTT goals**
- **Improved communication with universities**
- **Student internships within the Agency**
- **Continued facilitating role with BIFAD/SPARE**
- **Institutionalization of my position for successors**

Can the Partnership be Restored?

Short answer: **YES!!!**

...but to do so will take **effort and commitment on both sides** to sustain the dialogue and rebuild the partnership.

However, we are off to a **good start**.